The Mountain Preacher

R. Paul Caudill

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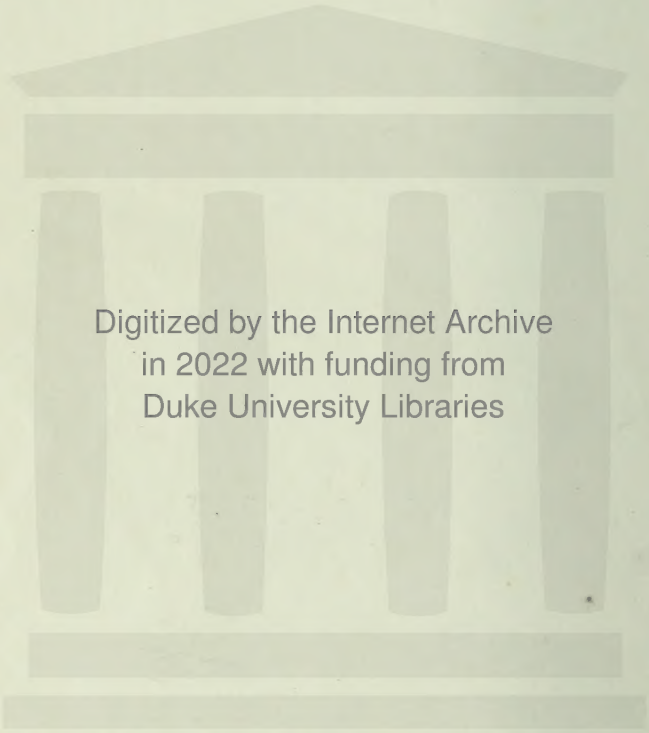
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THE MOUNTAIN PREACHER

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R. Paul Caudill

Blue Ridge Press of Boone
Boone, North Carolina

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DEDICATED

to

the membership of the Traphill Baptist Church of Traphill, North Carolina, and to my many friends of the larger community surrounding that church whose friendship and love have been, to me, a source of abiding joy through the years.

INTRODUCTION

This little book contains the first 52 of my columns entitled "The Mountain Preacher" published in the Journal-Patriot, the Watauga Democrat, and a number of other papers in western North Carolina.

It has been a rewarding experience to serve the Traphill Baptist Church, the church of my childhood (after serving as pastor of the First Baptist Church of Memphis, Tennessee, for 31 years), and the larger community where my earliest friendships were formed, and to share with them some of the intimate thoughts of my mind and heart as an ambassador of Christ.

I owe a debt of gratitude to Julius and John Hubbard, owners of the Journal-Patriot, for their encouragement incident to the writing of these columns, and to the other newspapers that have so graciously served as media for their distribution.

I also owe my deepest thanks to my secretary, Mrs. Eugenia Price, for her careful typing of the columns; and to Professor Edith Faye Easterling, English professor of Florida, for her splendid critique; and to my beloved wife, Fern, for her careful reading of the manuscript and for her excellent suggestions. I owe my thanks also to the gifted artist, Mrs. Carol Hartung, whose illustrative drawings appear in this book.

If the reading of these columns serves to bring even one soul into a closer walk with God and into a warmer Christian fellowship with others, my joy will be boundless.

R. Paul Caudill

"Ferndale" 1984

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The Quest

I am a mountain preacher. The mountains saw my beginnings, and I was nurtured in a mountain home. In this area I came to know the Lord Jesus Christ, and here I made my commitment to serve Him as a minister of His gospel.

In the providence of God I find myself once more at home in these hills serving the Lord at Traphill Baptist Church where my father, C. M. Caudill, was once pastor.

As I write these lines, I sit on a salt-lick rock with my neighbor's black Angus cattle circling me--wondering I suppose what I am doing here with a tablet and pen and Jack, my border collie, by my side, but with no salt for them.

The high mountains all about me--the Stone Mountain range, Horse Ridge, and Old Frozen Head--are beautiful. There is space and nothing to fence me in. The air is crisp and clean.

The red F on my cap symbolizes the First Baptist Church of Memphis, where I served as pastor for thirty-one years. My coveralls are double knit and comfortable, and my boots are just right for climbing.

Dr. Campbell, whose column, "The Country Preacher," preceded this column, once wrote a column such as only a brave man would write, a man who loved the truth.

Though we never met personally, we shared as truth lovers.

I went to school at Traphill, North Wilkesboro, Mars Hill College, Wake Forest University, and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. All the while I was searching for truth, truth about God and His will for man . . . truth about other religions. . . truth about freedom and social justice . . . truth about politics and economics. I wanted to be able to see and recognize the truth about many things and to learn to know the difference between good and evil.

I am still a pilgrim on this quest, but I do perceive far better than I once did. What I do see and I think I understand is what I will write about in this column.

Labor Day

Monday, September 5, is Labor Day, a holiday observed by all of the states of our country. Strictly speaking, there are no national holidays in the United States, since each state contains the jurisdiction over its own holidays. The holidays designated by the President and Congress apply only to the District of Columbia and for federal employees. Nevertheless, most of the states observe, in practice, the holidays designated for the District of Columbia and federal employees.

Labor Day which always falls on the first Monday in September is observed as a tribute to the working man.

Labor, as we think of it, relates to the services performed by those who work for wages rather than to the entrepeneurs--those who structure and direct a business or enterprise, assuming, at the same time, the risks involved.

How fitting it is that one day out of each year be set apart in honor of the working man, for upon his shoulders rests the material welfare of our land. He or she it is that rises with the sun to till our fields and replenish our graineries with abundant harvest. He or she it is that labors daily in our factories, and on our highways, providing for the necessaries of life.

Throughout the days of man, labor has been his portion. For did not the Lord say, "Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work" (Deuteronomy 5:13)?

But the laboring man needs not only the first Monday of September in each year as a day of rest; he also needs one day out of seven (Deuteronomy 5:13-14).

The family needs one day in seven for rest and for worship, as does the individual. Think what would happen to the home life in America if the Lord's Day had the observance that it had in America when our nation was young. Think how it would conserve energy if stores were closed, and the wheels of industry stilled for one day out of seven.

There are, of course, particular phases of needs that have to be met seven days a week. The sick have to be cared for. Those away from home have to be fed and housed.

The Bible is keen on the matter of work and of man's responsibility to labor in behalf of his family and others. Paul put it bluntly, "If any will not work neither let him eat" (II Thessalonians 3:10). And the apostle Paul also said, "But if any provideth not for his own, and specially his own household, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever" (I Timothy 5:8).

Blessed be the working man, and hallowed be the fruit of his hands. Let all our people continue to rise up and call the working man blessed!

And let every working man remember the word of God found in Revelation 22:12: "Behold, I come quickly and my reward is with me, to render to each man according as his work is."

"We Must Work"

Have you read these words of Jesus: "We must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work"? It seems especially appropriate to read those words again, in this week that follows our annual Labor Day. It is nice to have a vacation, but it is even nicer, I believe, to be able to return to a work and face its challenge.

Happy is the person who has a work to do that is worth doing, and who does it well.

Jesus labored almost incessantly. And He labored not for gain. That is, He sought no personal benefits from His labors. All He wanted was the love of those whom He served, and their love for the heavenly Father.

You see, Jesus was human as well as divine. He grew tired from His labors, just as we tire from work.

Once when He was tired He lay down in a fisherman's boat on the Sea of Galilee and slept so soundly that even the stormy sea did not awaken Him. His disciples had to rouse Him from His sleep, fearing that they would perish in the waves of the sea that lashed the boat.

The words of Jesus are arresting words: "We must work . . . while it is day . . . the night comes."

Of course Jesus was not thinking of the work of the fisherman, or of the farmer, or of the carpenter at that particular moment. He was thinking about heavenly duties--the work that God has a right to expect us to do while on earth.

Jesus came into the world with one increasing purpose, namely, to help all the peoples of the world to come to know God the Father, and to love Him and to serve Him in all their ways, and in all their days.

We are all pilgrims, and our journey on earth is short. Like Jesus, "We must work . . . for the night comes."

Churchgoers

Here they come . . . there they go . . . these beloved church members and friends of the church who gather for worship in their respective churches on the Lord's Day.

Such Christians, said Jesus, are the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

It would be easier for many of these believers to rest at home on Sunday morning, for they are weary from a week of toil. Some are physically "under the weather," but still they come. Out of love for their Lord, and for their church, they come. These, by their faith and works, constitute the visible aspect of the foundation for a viable society. If our nation is great, they are the reasons for it.

Our word church (Gr. ekklesia) is a word with an ancient background that is full of meaningful history.

Originally the word was used to represent a called-out assembly, a regular summoned political body, among the city-states of ancient Greece. There, matters of common concern were laid before the people.

Later, the word came to represent an assemblage or gathering, or meeting in general.

In the days of ancient Israel the term was used for the congregation of the Israelites when they gathered for religious purposes.

Eventually the use of the name passed to the Christian churches or congregations, whether of a local body of believers or of believers in general throughout the world.

The apostle Paul called himself "a persecutor of the church," meaning the churches in general (Philippians 3:6). He also referred to Phoebe, a servant (deaconess) of the church at Cenchreae (Romans 16:1).

The church, as Christians know it, was founded (built) by Christ (Matthew 16), and He assured His followers that not even the gates of Hades will ever be able to prevail against it.

The church is the body of which Christ is the head, and her mission is universal--to make disciples, to baptize them, and to teach them to observe all the commands that Jesus left for them on earth.

Personally, I am grateful that at a very early age I was led by the Holy Spirit to receive Jesus as Savior and Lord and to become a member of His church.

In that fellowship I expect to remain and, I pray, to grow in loyalty to Him who is the head of the church, until my days are no more.

Churchgoing

The matter of churchgoing has been on my mind a long time, and it refuses to go away.

Why are we who profess to be followers of Christ and members of churches so different in our loyalties? Why are we so diverse in our response to spiritual opportunities?

Some rarely enter the church door unless the occasion is special like Easter, or Christmas, or a funeral.

Those who give in support of the church are in the minority. Approximately one third of the members cooperate with their gifts to pay for the lights, the fuel for heating and cooling the church, the literature used in Sunday School, the pastor's salary, missions, and other related needs.

There are relatively few tithers in any one church--those who honor their Lord with their substance by bringing (as God's word commands) their tithes and offerings to the church regularly.

Some tithe for a while and then stop. Some give regularly for a season but do not continue to give.

Why is this true? What makes the difference? Is there a solid answer?

I believe there is. These faithful ones who support their churches in season and out of season with gifts of service and money are people with an obsession. They are people with a persistent, disturbing preoccupation with a spiritual idea or feeling. They are unable to get away from the fact that they have spoken vows of confidence in Christ in determining to be His disciples . . . to follow in His steps to the best of their ability as long as they live.

Having this obsession makes the difference. It springs from an experience in which the person came to know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

The experience was real. It was soul-shaking. It amounted to the passing from indifference into a new life-style that lasts throughout their days.

This was the experience of the apostle Paul, and that experience coupled with his resolute determination to put his experience into practice set him apart as perhaps the greatest Christian of all the centuries.

Magnificent Obsession

When you read this column, have a Bible near you, for you may need to refer to it occasionally. You may wish to refer to it now as I discuss with you an aspect of the apostle Paul's magnificent obsession.

I call it magnificent because I know of no other person whose obsession was quite so complete. Suppose you open your Bible at Philippians 3 and read verses 7-9.

There Paul tells us that the burning desire of his life was to "gain" Christ and be "found in Him" and have a type of life-style that comes through faith in Him.

He desired to know all about Jesus. No matter what Christ's demands were for him as a person, he wanted to know it and to seek to carry out all of His commands.

Paul tells us that his quest for the knowledge that comes from knowing Christ as Lord and Savior caused him to re-evaluate life and to find new priorities. "Whatever things were gains to me," he said, these "I consider . . . to be loss because of the surpassing greatness of the personal knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

Who has ever talked like that before? Who backed his words up with an exemplary life as the apostle Paul did?

So far as we know he never turned back . . . not once! When he decided to follow Jesus, the course of his life became as constant as the presence of the stars in the heavens above us.

Talk about the romance of noble endeavor, but nothing in the Bible surpasses that of the life of the apostle Paul. Search all the records in the Bible, and you will find that his conversion, his trials, his sufferings, and his steadfast endurance in the faith are without a parallel.

Why? I think it was because he had a magnificen obsession. And part of that obsession was to knc Christ as a personal Savior and friend who brings t all abundant mercy and grace in the hour of need.

I arise, I face the sunrise,
And do the things my father learned to do.
Stars in the purple dusk above the rooftops
Pale in a saffron mist and seem to die.
And I myself on a swiftly tilting planet
Stand before a glass and tie my tie.[1]
(Conrad Aiken in "Morning Song")

All of us are doubtless like Conrad Aiken, in some respects, for we learn from our fathers, and from our mothers, and our life-styles are forever influenced by the impact of their lives.

In one respect, however, the apostle Paul differed in his life-style from the life-style of his parents.

Upon meeting Christ on the Damascus road, Paul swung into a different spiritual orbit. Thereafter he zealously tried to move in the center of Christ's will. His solemn questions, "Who art thou, Lord?" and "What wilt thou have me to do?" became the hallmark of his life henceforth.

He not only wanted to experience the widest possible understanding of Christ as a person and of His will for his own life, but also to achieve the new life-style that comes from this new relationship, this being "in Christ."

He wanted to be "in Him" and to have the new kind of righteousness--not merely the righteousness of the upright life that springs from the observance of spiritual laws, but rather the life-style that comes through faith in Christ. Paul calls it "the righteousness of God that is based on the faith" (Philippians 3:9).

This was an obsession with Paul. The dream of that fulfillment, that realization, was with him by day and by night.

Here we come to the head and front of our offending as followers of Christ in today's world. There

is, at times, certainly on the part of all of us only a little difference between our personal life style and that of the unbeliever.

There seems to be in all of us altogether too much of the character of the chameleon--the lizard of the Old World that was said to have the unusual ability to change the color of the skin so as to resemble the bark of the tree upon which it happened to be at the moment.

Jesus was not speaking of Christians who are fickle or changeable when He called them "the salt of the earth . . . the light of the world."

The keepers of the bastion of truth must be persons who become increasingly "steadfast and unmovable," knowing that their labors are "not in vain in the Lord."

The Fellowship of His Suffering

One aspect of the apostle Paul's magnificent obsession had to do with suffering. He wanted to experience "the fellowship of his sufferings" (Philippians 3:10).

This was no Pollyanna disposition on his part. So far as we can tell, he was in no way a blindly optimistic person concerning the demands of Christian discipleship. He learned how both to suffer gracefully and to die heroically as a follower of Christ.

How unlike this is the life-style of many of those who profess to be Christ's followers. And when I say "those," I mean all of us who pretend to follow in His train.

By nature we do not like to suffer. When out of aspirin and pain-relieving pills, we soon testify to this blatant truth.

All who serve as pastors or in other posts of Christian ministry know how difficult it is to find persons who will assume responsibility at needed posts of service. The cry for Christian workers is as constant as the days. Jesus Himself noted how bountiful the harvest is, and yet, said He, "the workers are few."

Christ allowed nothing to deflect Him from the path of duty. Even the cross with its despicable name and the indescribable horrors experienced by those who died upon it could not turn Him from His mission.

No follower of Christ need fear being called upon to die on the cross to help atone for the sins of others. That was Christ's mission.

But the purpose of Christ in coming to the world as God's only begotten Son is yet unfulfilled so far as the total world of men is concerned. And if it were fulfilled in this generation of men, there would have to be a fresh start by Christ's followers in the next generation.

There is much in the way of "leftovers" in the matter of Christ's effort to redeem the world. And

there will be suffering for Christians in our day--t
kind of suffering that comes with disappointment
disillusionments, broken friendships, and rejecti
on the part of those who differ in their life-styles

The Problem of Hunger

There are many issues that claw at the soul of the concerned Christian in today's world. One of the issues is hunger, a craving or urgent need for food and the weakened condition that results from prolonged lack of food.

Hunger is a word with which most of us in these mountains are not too well acquainted. Cases of hunger there may be in every community, yes, as there always have been. But here the earth is good, and we plant and we reap our harvest, for the dews and the rains are kind to us. There is no sub-Sahara with us where, as the desert spreads, the planting and reaping are gone forever.

However distant the definition of hunger may be to most of us, there are hundreds of millions of people, our fellow human beings throughout the world, with whom hunger is a constant companion.

Nearly one billion people, approximately one out of four, have poverty as their daily trial.

Some twenty million people die annually from starvation or hunger-related diseases. At least twelve million children never reach the age of five, for around thirty thousand of them die daily from starvation.

Look at the minute hand on the face of your watch. Each time it makes the circuit, 28 of our fellow human beings will have died from starvation. It has been estimated that more people have died from starvation during the past five years than lost their lives in all of the wars, murders, and revolutions of the past century.

But you say, what can I do about a problem such as this when it is world-wide in scope? What can we all do--we who are so far removed from the magnitude of world hunger?

First we can start at home. We can inquire if there is a family in our midst actually suffering from hunger. We can look about us to see if there are any

little children with bloated stomachs, and rickety bodies, whose capacity to live is fading away.

Those that die annually from hunger may be but a handful in comparison with those who live and continue to bear the savage scars of hunger on their minds and bodies.

We can contribute to worthy organizations that endeavor to deal with the issue of world hunger, and provide at least partial answers.

For 13 years, for instance, I served as Chairman of the Relief Committee of the Baptist World Alliance, in the wake of World War II. By our united endeavor we were able to move into critical areas of world need with millions upon millions of dollars worth of food and medicine and clothing.

There are many worthy channels through which you can share. Talk to your pastor about the matter and to other informed friends. Finding a way to help is no problem if you are really concerned about the hungry.

Above all things, pray for God's guidance, and ask Him to open doors of ministry for you and others in this vast area of need. After all, did not Jesus say, "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me" (Matthew 25:40)?

"The Lord Willing"

The author of the book of James was the half brother of Jesus our Lord and Savior. His work reminds us, at times, of the Jewish wisdom literature such as Proverbs and the wisdom of Solomon.

The thrust of James's message, it appears, had to do mainly with the social and ethical aspects of the Gospel.

James wanted to see his fellow Christians "square their lives" with the gospel which they professed to believe. His words are extremely practical, down to earth, and easily understood.

One of his most provocative sayings is found in Chapter 4, verses 13-15: "Come now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into this city, and spend a year there, and trade, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. What is your life? For ye are a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall both live, and do this or that."

This is evidently the motivation for the words Deo volente (God willing) used so often by early Christians.

It is an expression that has come to be woven into the very warp and woof of my own life. I find myself saying, again and again, in correspondence, and in daily conversation, "if the Lord wills," or "the Lord willing."

It is an expression that we should all use with sincerity. After all, who knows what the morrow will bring forth? Certainly I do not know. And you do not know. No one knows!

Life itself is such a frail thing. It hangs as it were by a thread.

With Louisa May Alcott, we all know that there lies out ahead of us

Death, the stern sculptor,
With a touch
No earthly power can stay,
Changes to marble in an hour
The beautiful pale clay.[2]
("Our Madonna," Stanza 6)

Engulfing waves of materialism and secularism swirl all about us. By and large, little thought is given to things spiritual, which alone have to do with values that are eternal.

We are all God's creatures. He made us. Whatever mission we have on earth, it came from Him. To attempt to live and chart our pilgrimage apart from His wisdom and guidance is to lose sight of the real meaning of our existence.

"No man is an Island," said John Donne, "entire of itself. Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankind; And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; It tolls for thee."[3]

Truly there is an interpersonal relationship, intended by our Creator to extend throughout the length and the breadth of the human race. We are all "a piece of the continent," a part of the main. Essentially, we are "members one of another," and no man lives to himself, and no man dies to himself, for we are all the Lord's.

The cattle upon a thousand hills are His, and without Him nothing came into being. We are all His people, and "the sheep of his pasture."

Is it not time for us to take a look at ourselves in the light of others and to examine our attitudes and our motives in the light of their lives and their needs?

He who lives best serves best.

And those whose days are filled with greatest joy are those who constantly seek to share with others both in their joys and in their sorrows.

It is this lack of loving concern, one for another, that provides the soil for human discord that manifests itself in families, in communities, and in nations the world over. The whole world of men hungers for love, for loving relationships, for humane concern one for another.

The source of highest love and of loving concern one for another comes from God. It springs from being in Christ and coming to know Him whose love was so great for the world that He gave himself freely on the cross in order to open wide a new door of freedom from sin and of hope for life eternal.

Jesus and Prayer

Consider the prayer life of Jesus our Lord. Numerous passages in the Bible tell of His prayer life.

He prayed alone (Matthew 26:36).

He prayed with friends (Matthew 14:22).

He prayed for future believers (John 17:20).

He prayed for the church (John 17:9).

He prayed for workers (John 4:35).

He prayed for sinners (Luke 23:34).

He prayed for His disciples (John 17).

He prayed in public (John 17:1).

He prayed at mealtime (Luke 22:19).

He prayed for Christian unity (John 17:21).

He prayed for Himself, as in the garden of Gethsemane, where He made the supreme decision of His life, saying, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me: nevertheless, not as I will but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39).

He prayed all night at least once (Luke 6:12). The occasion was the choice of "the twelve" whom He called apostles and whom He gathered around Him for special seasons of teaching in preparation for their life mission.

Have you ever prayed all night in behalf of any cause?

Many are the "nights of prayer" in which it has been my privilege to engage. Again and again I would call my church, the First Baptist of Memphis, to a night of prayer. Sometimes the congregation as a whole was invited to come throughout the night at the hour that was best for them. At other times, groups within the church would come and lead in the prayers at given hours.

One evening, a bright young medical student, a son of the director of the southwide Baptist Brotherhood,

approached me and said, "Pastor, is it all right if I stay all night?"

"Of course!"

As the gray of morning came and we took our leave of the sanctuary, this young man came to me again and thanked me for the experience that he had during the night of prayer.

That same young doctor today is one of the brightest witnesses for Christ as he practices his profession.

Jesus said that men "ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18:1).

"More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of" (Tennyson, "Morte D'Arthur," Line 415).

The life of Job was filled with remarkable epi sodes that are forever of interest to religious mar His reaction to suffering and his secure faith whe seasons of doubt arose will challenge forever th admiration of man.

Even his beloved wife came to the point that sh felt Job would be better off if he would curse God ar die. Had he not endeavored to be the epitome of good ness? Was not his life morally impeccable? Was he no dutiful in his prayer life and in his regard for hi family? Why then such suffering?

Even three of his close friends, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, came and pointed their fingers accusingl at Job.

And yet his faith held firm.

It was toward the close of the recorded narrativ that tells of his life that he uttered these arrestin words: "I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear But now mine eye seeth thee" (Job 42:5).

Herein lies the difference between hearing an experiencing.

Job had heard much about God and had entrusted hi life-style to the guidance of God's commands. But i his suffering he had experienced something different It was as if he had met God face to face.

Perhaps for many of us life's pilgrimage becomes hard road to travel, and our faith weakens. We fai to trust God in the midst of our disappointments, ou frustrations and doubts. When divine promises, lon familiar, are seen as divine reality, God rewards ou faith with peace and strength.

Once a person has had this "seeing" experience, hi whole outlook on life changes for the better--and for ever.

Thanksgiving

It was bitter cold when the Mayflower with her 102 Pilgrim fathers dropped anchor in Plymouth Harbor in December, 1620.

After remaining aboard ship for the passing of the Lord's Day, the Pilgrims came ashore amid sleet and ice and snow and began to erect huts for dwelling in the inhospitable forest that surrounded them.

The hardship and sufferings of that first winter were marked by intense pain and sorrow. At one time, we are told, only seven persons were well. Illness claimed half of the group by death. Four years later the colony consisted of only 184 persons.

Our American concept of Thanksgiving as a national institution originated with the Pilgrim fathers. In 1621, after their first harvest, following a winter of great privation and starvation, Governor William Bradford proclaimed a day of thanksgiving. Both the colonists and the neighboring Indians shared in the feast which provided, along with the other meager fare, four wild turkeys.

In later years the various colonies set aside a day for prayer and thanksgiving so that by 1680 in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, Thanksgiving Day became a recognized annual holiday.

During the Revolution, Continental Congress made provision for a day of thanksgiving annually. But it was in 1789 that Washington proclaimed an annual day of offering thanks which began in 1795. President Madison, following the War of 1812, made a similar proclamation. In 1864, President Lincoln designated the last Thursday in November for Thanksgiving, as Washington had done before him.

Since that time, by annual proclamation, the Presidents have called us to the observance of an annual national day of thanksgiving.

In 1941 Congress passed a joint resolution declaring that henceforth Thanksgiving Day should be observed on the fourth Thursday of November.

In Psalm 116 we have what Elmer A. Leslie called "a psalm of personal thanksgiving." He titled the psalm "I Was Low, And He Saved Me." These words reflect the experience of the Pilgrim fathers even though they were spoken by the psalmist long centuries before their hours of deep distress.

Here are the words of the psalmist: "What shall I render unto Jehovah For all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, And call upon the name of Jehovah. I will pay my vows unto Jehovah, Yea, in the presence of all his people" (Psalm 116:12-14).

What better thing can you and I do at this time of national Thanksgiving than to "call upon the name of the Lord" and pay our "vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people"?

If we fail to do this, we will have missed the true spirit of Thanksgiving.

God's Blessings

Do you enjoy blessings? Blessings from God?

This is what Malachi is talking about in Chapter 3 f his prophecy (verses 10-11).

These are his words: "Bring ye the whole tithe nto the store-house, that there may be food in my ouse, and prove me now herewith, saith Jehovah of osts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, nd pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be oom enough to receive it."

What a promise! What blessings!

But here is the point in Malachi's words. The com- ng of the blessings depends on or is conditioned by omething else. And that something else is the bring- ng of the tithe "into the store-house." Yes, "the nole tithe."

Once in my ministry, I was present at a meeting nere church leaders were discussing their ability to uild some rooms to be used by the Sunday School in ne teaching of their children.

After hearing enough of doubting, I became bold nough to introduce the principle of the tithe. I re- eived from the chairman of the deacons an icy stare nd these words: "As to this tithing matter, I don't now anything about it!"

The reason the brother did not know anything about he tithe was that he had not become acquainted with he words of Malachi.

Whether or not the brother ever began to tithe, I o not know. But I do know this: People began to espond to the challenge of Malachi, and the blessings ere poured out upon us in great measure. And the uilding was built on schedule.

Malachi's words are extremely personal and apply o the individual believer as well as to the household f believers. His words, when coming to a serious eliever who has not heard them before, may literally erk him to a standstill. And before he recovers from

the experience, he is likely to get the point. H
life-style in stewardship may be changed "in t
twinkling of an eye."

It is amazing how the words of Jesus come to us ıily with fresh meaning. Take, for instance, His ɔrds in Matthew 11:28: "Come unto me, all ye that ıbor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ake my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek ıd lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your ɔuls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Don't we all need to hear these words? Don't we ll have burdens of one sort or another? Don't we all ɛed to learn from Him?

Jesus' words, "I will give you rest," come from an ld verb in common usage from the days of the poet ɔmer to the present meaning "to cause or permit one ɔ cease from any movement or labor in order to recover nd collect his strength."

Another meaning of the word is "to refresh," "to evive," but how many of us take Jesus at His word? ɔw many of us expect to find the kind of life He romises to offer if we come to Him?

In contemporary society, we are plagued incessantly y suicides. Among teenagers there are more suicides ɔday than at any time of our nation's history. I myelf have ministered to families, again and again, in he wake of a suicide.

Why do these things occur?

In medical language, what is the etiology, the ause or the causes of this abnormal response to life's onflicts?

At the heart of the problem is a lack of soul rest. ersons who become weary of life, and of interpersonal elationships, have no rest for their souls. They are ired of the conflicts of life. Often they feel they ave no friends left--no one to talk to, no one to hare with, no one to confide in.

Jesus says, "Learn of me for I am meek and lowly of eart and you will find rest for your souls. Come unto e and I will teach you to have peace in your heart."

Only He can say, "Come unto me," (that is, not another) for "I am the way, and the truth, and t life. . . ."

He is the great Teacher who gives us an outlo that is strong and brave.

In fellowship with Him, we are likely to be sayi to ourselves, even as Paul said, "I can do all thin in him that strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13).

This is what Christ does for us when we come Him in an hour of need, when our labors appear t great and our burdens too heavy to bear. As we tar in His presence, we are refreshed in spirit. We a revived. We are delivered!

The happiest people I know are those who keep co pany with Jesus in their thoughts and in their wor and deeds. They love to dwell in His presence. Th love to share in the fellowship of His suffering They love the striving for His life-style.

They are aware that all of us are pilgrims and th life's journey is short at the best. And they ha come to realize that the greatest of all fellowshi on the journey is that of Jesus as Savior and Lord.

We who live in the U.S.A. have an unparalleled opportunity for growth and development in the use of our talents. The doors of our schools and colleges stand wide open. Yet we are told that an alarming percentage of the students in our public schools are giving less than their best in their response to teachers' assignments.

There is a keen accent on growth in the Bible. The psalmist, for instance, speaks of how "The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree: He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. . . . They shall flourish. . . . They shall still bring forth fruit in old age. . ." (92:12ff.).

The tragedy of our failure to "grow and flourish" was illustrated to me in a comparative observation I made of two coconut palms (and by a pamphlet I read). Both were planted at the same time, one on one side of the street and the other on the opposite side.

Because of a "yellowing disease," the coconut palm has almost disappeared from Florida. But a yellowing-resistant coconut palm has been developed as a substitute for the dying "Jamaica Tall coconut palm." It is called the "Malayan Dwarf." Actually the tree is not a true dwarf but rather a semi-dwarf variety of coconut palm, Cocos nucifera.[4]

The dwarf tree, when cared for properly, grows rapidly and may obtain a height of 60 feet in Florida. The trunks of the Malayan Dwarf are smaller than those of the Jamaica Tall, are straight, and have "little swelling at the base." The fronds, feathery and shorter, are more numerous than those of the Jamaica Tall. Some of the nuts are smaller. Flowering begins on the Malayan Dwarf within about four years.

One of the Malayan Dwarf variety was planted in the edge of the yard of my good friends Mr. and Mrs. J. Durward Maynard, who reside on 924 Hillcrest Blvd., West Palm Beach, Florida.

I saw the tree (a tree of eight years) as Mrs. Caudill and I were leaving, and I began to ask my

friend about the tree--why it was so healthy in appear ance and so tall and fruitful. I counted 40 coconut on it pushing toward maturity in April.

Durward said, "I have cared for the palm, as I hav cared for my yard. I fertilized it when I fertilize the grass. I watered it when I watered the grass."

Across the street was a coconut palm of the sam variety, planted at the same time, but now it wa hardly five feet in height. Why? Obviously becaus it had not been cared for.

Many people are, in some respects, like the large Malayan Dwarf coconut tree: they have made much o their opportunity for growth and development.

In speaking of Jesus, Luke said, "And Jesus advance in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

Addendum

The Sunday Schools of our churches, and the worshi services, offer untold opportunities for both intellec tual and spiritual growth. Yet, parents without numbe fail to see that their children make use of these God given opportunities. All too often the parents them selves fail to set the example.

Christmas

"Keep Christ in Christmas" is an annual recurring logan that is found everywhere from billboards to reeting cards.

Such a slogan is puerile, fatuous, and all but bsurd. There can be no Christmas apart from Christ. ny so-called Christmas observance that does not reverntly relate to Christ is a travesty.

Such a slogan can only reflect both the lack of nderstanding and the distance from which contemporary ociety has moved from the original intent of the bservance.

The season that proposes to honor the birthday of he Savior has come to be a season of commerce, a seaon of striving for personal material gain, a season or gift-giving to one another rather than to the erson whose birthday we honor.

If there is a Christmas tree in the church, as so ften there is, should it not be loaded with gifts of ubstance to be used in ministering to the needy 'round bout! They are always with us, the poor, the needy. fter all, did not Jesus say, "For ye have the poor lways with you" (Matthew 26:11)?

Once when I delivered a package on my route as a oung clerk carrier in the town of North Wilkesboro, t Christmas time, the good lady, upon receiving it, aid, "Oh, I must open this now and see if I am supposed to send something in return!"

Of course gift-giving to one another, out of loving ppreciation, is a beautiful thing at Christmas time. ut should not our major gifts be directed to Him? fter all, He is the occasion of the observance.

If there is a Christmas tree, see that every member of the family places his "best gift" on the tree or Jesus. That gift can be a special offering for the ord's work to be deposited in the offering plate at he church on the following Lord's Day. Or the gift, n the Savior's name, may be food for a needy person, r clothing, or other needful items.

Let Christmas Day at the church be a time for gift to be brought in the Savior's name to the end that eac person may have a part, however small, to help furthe His mission on earth. In speaking of His mission, H said, "I am the light of the world: he that followet me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have th light of life" (John 8:12).

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life" (Galatians 6:7-8).

If one believes in God and in His ultimate purpose for all men, these words are staggering.

The kind of life a man lives in his relationship to God and man determines his future.

What we have here is a law, a principle, that operates in the life of every person. It is the primal law of sowing and reaping.

Jesus said, "By their fruits ye shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but the corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit" (Matthew 7:16-18). This law holds in nature. Jesus alluded to it when He said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21).

Jesus was talking about the everyday life-style of His followers--their conduct, marked by good or evil, makes for happiness or remorse at the last day. One of the great tragedies in the contemporary scene is man's growing inability to distinguish between the things that differ--to tell right from wrong.

The ancient prophet wrestled with this problem saying, "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" (Isaiah 5:20).

An elect woman of the church said, "Pastor, what is wrong today, and what is right? And how do we determine the right and the wrong of a matter? It seems

that our morals are ever changing . . . they are not the same all the time."

To purchase many of the commodities of life, people must have a unit of measurement, a basis of determination of amounts. That is why we have the yardstick, the pound, and all other units of measurement.

The only viable basis to determine morality lies in concepts of truth found in the Holy Scriptures.

The Ten Commandments consist of basic guidelines that are as relevant today for a viable society as they were when delivered amongst the flashes of Mt. Sinai. Lying is lying. Covetousness is covetousness. Stealing is stealing. Adultery is adultery.

These concepts of truth that have to do with things both human and divine are eternal. In them there is no variation or shadow of turning.

God's Promise

God gave to Noah a great promise following the flood and after he had built an altar and made his presentation of burnt offerings on the altar.

Noah had been through the terrible experience when "all the fountains of the great deep" were broken up and the windows of heaven "opened" so that rain followed upon the earth for 40 days and 40 nights (Genesis 7:11f.).

Would this happen again? Noah must have had this thought as he made his offering.

But God allayed Noah's fears with these words, "I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake, for that the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease" (Genesis 8:21-22).

We may think of these words of the Lord when the rains fail to come in "due season" and gardens fail and farm crops on a nationwide scale fall below the normal production, as they do from time to time.

For there will be another seedtime, and another harvest, so long as the earth remains, as God has spoken.

Man does not yet understand the seasons and the variations in the cycles, for man did not create the seasons. He did not establish the cycles of summer and winter, and heat and cold, and day and night, and seedtime and harvest. Such were the works of God.

There is a purpose in everything that God has made, although we do not always understand the purpose.

But we are able to understand man's disregard of nature in his ruthless assault on the ecology of the land. We know now what certain types of waste spilled into the waters will do for our fish. We know now how soil can be poisoned and the atmosphere rendered unfit

to breathe. Man's disregard of nature, and of the goo earth, is all his doing--not God's.

Notwithstanding the perfidies of man, God has said "I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for token of a covenant between me and the earth" (Gene sis 9:13).

So every time we look upon the rainbow and th stirring colors that stand always in the same orde (violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange, red), le us give thanks unto God, our Creator, for His mercifu covenant with the earth and mankind.

The brightness of the stars has for generations oused the interest of man. Stars that appear the rightest are called stars of the "first magnitude." tars that appear "faintest" are called stars of the sixth magnitude," with gradations of brightness be- ween. (Scientists determine the precise apparent agnitudes by the use of the photoelectric photometer.) ome stars are called "variables" because they are not onstant in brightness over long periods of time.

A significant factor in measuring the brightness f a star is the color of the star, which ranges from blue white" to "reddish." Scientists tell us that he bluest stars have a surface temperature of around 5,000° F., while the coolest stars (those reddish in olor) have a surface temperature of around 5,000° F.

The makeup of a typical star such as our sun is: ydrogen atoms - 92.5%; helium atoms - 7%, more or ess; and other chemical elements - .5%.

There are special stars called "white dwarfs." hey are the companions of the brightest stars or of ther solitary objects nearby.

Strange as it may seem, there is a shocking analogy etween the stars of the heavens and the persons who ave publicly committed their lives to Christ as His ollowers. Some of these followers may also be classed s "variables" because they are inconstant in their anifest devotion to Christ and in the keeping of His ommands.

Although some facets of life may change, as many tars do, there is one facet of the lives of believers hat never changes--the brightness of their witness. s Daniel said: "And they that are wise shall shine s the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn any to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" Daniel 12:3).

All who are born of the Spirit can acquire this nvariable character, if they so desire. For every- here, throughout the world, there are those who have

not heard the good news about Jesus, who continue
wait for the messengers who bear the good tidings--f
messengers who have not arrived.

Great is the speed of light. The round figure is 86,000 miles per second.

The variable distance between the earth and the un is said to be 94,500,000 miles. Nevertheless, ight from the sun reaches the earth in about eight inutes.

Modern physicists have spent much time in the study f the character and source of light. Some believe hat light comes from units called "photons" or "quanta" hich represent units of energy. The assumption is hat in some manner light waves convey these bundles f energy on their pilgrimage. The tiny pulses of lectricity, physicists tell us, are produced when the hotons collide with certain types of matter.[5]

The people of Jesus' day knew little about the cientific character of light, so when Jesus said, "I m the light of the world: he that followeth me shall ot walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of ife" (John 8:12), they were startled. Matthew tells s that the people were amazed at His words, for He aught them as "one having authority" and not as the cribes. This is doubtless why so many turned away rom His words by the Sea of Galilee.

Those who follow Jesus closely and have come to now Him increasingly in a personal way have light to hich the unbeliever is a stranger.

To understand the light-giving power of Jesus, one as to become His disciple, sit at His feet as a earner, and go from the shallows into the depth of eligious experience.

The impulses of the light that come from Him are ufficient to guide His followers in every crisis of ife. And this one thing is certain: Both you and I ill face a crisis one day in which such light is eeded.

The Tithe

Open your Bible and read Malachi 3:7-12 before yo read this column, for whatever I say in the column wil be hinged to that one passage of Scripture. There i so much in the passage to share that I hardly kno where to begin. Have you ever been like that? It's bit like being away from your family for months ar then, when you come together, wondering what you shoul talk about first.

Most of us are either unacquainted with this Scrip ture or have been away from the passage too long. Som may look upon it as severe and no longer relevant. don't feel that way.

I look upon the passage as one of the most challeng ing passages in the Bible. True, the reading of i claws at the soul. But why? Because most people ar far removed from its thought in their daily lives.

How many of you, for instance, tithe--that is bring into the Lord's house one tenth of your incomes Few.

"How do you know?" you ask. I know because I hav served as a pastor of various types of churches fo many years, and I have known intimately the people wh gathered for worship there. I have shared with them and they have shared with me concerning their life styles. And in the life-style of the average Christian there is no disposition to tithe as the Bible commands

Malachi was blunt, precise, and unflinching in hi words about the tithe. Listen to him: "From the day of your fathers ye have turned aside from mine ordin ances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and will return unto you, saith Jehovah of hosts.

"But ye say, Wherein shall we return? Will a ma rob God? yet ye rob me.

"But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee?

"In tithes and offerings" (verses 7 and 8).

If that is not straight talk, I wouldn't kno where to find it.

Our response to the passage is not unlike the esponse of the multitudes who turned away from Jesus / the Sea of Galilee, saying, "This is a hard saying; no can hear it?" (John 6:60).

And Jesus was not talking about tithing. He was erely trying to acquaint His disciples with His own haracter and mission saying things like this: "I am ome down from heaven . . . he that believeth hath ternal life . . . I am the living bread which came own out of heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he hall live for ever . . ." (John 6).

Robbing God is not a comfortable thing to talk bout. Such words as those of Malachi have the chill- ng effect of a biting wind on an icy night.

But Malachi was not a man to deal with important atters in a maudlin manner. His words were never weak nd effusively sentimental. Listen to his words in erse 9: "Ye are cursed with the curse; for ye rob me, ven this whole nation."

"Ye" means you and me, not some remote fellow raveler on a distant planet.

One of the most arresting aspects of the human min is the thing we call memory. It enables the individua to recall present experiences long after the event Wordsworth spoke of this in his lines to Tintur Abbey, saying

> The beauteous forms
> I have owed to them,
> In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
> Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart.

The ability to remember and recall is variable i persons. There are born, now and then (but not man in any generation), persons with what we call eideti memory. They have the uncanny ability to recall visua images with remarkable accuracy. For instance, on with such a memory can look at a printed page an recall verbatim sentence after sentence that appear on the page.

But this extraordinary ability passes with th years.

Surely the writer of Ecclesiastes must have had i mind the ability of the individual to recall teaching that had come to him concerning the greatness and th goodness of God, for he said, "Remember also th Creator in the days of thy youth, before the evil day come, and the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, have no pleasure in them" (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

Once as I took leave of the choir of the First Baptist Church of North Wilkesboro, N. C., following the benediction of the morning worship service, noticed a piece of paper lying on the floor. I picke it up and found these words written on it: "The best time to serve God is in youth; and the best thing t serve him with is a sound mind and a strong body." never learned who wrote the words, but someone obvi- ously was impressed by the sermon and left his witnes in the penciled note for others.

The more constant one's fellowship is with the holy Scriptures, with Christ, and with others who share the Christian experience, the more likely one is to "remember" his Creator and His purposes as they have to do with our interpersonal relationships here in life.

The Old Life-Style

In his plea for the abandonment of the "old life style" (Ephesians 4:17-24), the apostle Paul makes a earnest plea for Christ's followers "to walk no longe . . . in the vanity of their mind."

This vanity of mind results from ignorance, a lac of understanding, alienation from the wisdom of God and a hardened heart.

Such people have come to the point in life wher they cease "to care" giving themselves over to "shock ing conduct" as the Bible puts it.

It is a terrible moment in the life of man when h has "ceased to care" about spiritual matters, abou the commands of God, and about his relationship t others in a viable society.

Gibbons, the noted historian, records the fall o the Roman Empire in words that are clear to all.

There was, for instance, rank venality among th office-holding class. There was among both the rulin classes and the common people offensively gross immor ality that beggars description.

One woman, for instance, was married 23 times, an in this instance the man she married had been marrie 22 times.

There are those who feel that in America toda there are similar denigrating aspects of social behavio which, if allowed to continue in ascendency, eventuall lead to the downfall of democracy and the consequen loss of our civil and political liberties.

And all this is in addition to the internal conse quences of such life-styles to the souls of the person involved.

"Brothers" and "Sisters"

Many of the followers of Jesus in today's world fail to experience the gladness that characterized the fellowship of the early Christians.

We read in Acts 2:46-47 how the disciples, "day by day, continuing stedfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they took their food with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people."

In those days there were no church buildings as we have them today. There were only the temple and the synagogues where Christians often gathered and were allowed to witness to their faith.

We have our church buildings, but do we not need to experience more of the fellowship that comes by gathering in the homes of the people on spiritual occasions?

One of the happiest evenings of my life was spent in the community of Dry Ridge, Kentucky, Owen County, where I was preaching in a revival series of meetings. One evening when we were invited into a home for the evening meal, the house was literally filled with friends from the Dry Ridge Church--friends of the host family, who gathered with us for fellowship and the evening meal. The fellowship of that evening hour will long be remembered. It was like a bit of heaven on earth.

In the early Christian churches a warm relationship existed among the believers in a given community and among believers as a whole.

Paul entreated his fellow Christians to do good unto "all men" and "especially unto those of the household of faith."

In our social fraternities of the present-day college campus, fellow members refer to each other with the word "brother." The words "my fraternity brother" are almost as common as the sunshine on a college campus.

But how often do we speak of our brothers in Christ in such a way?

Again and again, in his epistles to the young churches, the apostle Paul addressed his fellow believers as "brothers." In the closing chapter of I Corinthians he said, "Now I beseech you, brothers . . ." (verse 15). And again "all the brothers salute you" (verse 20); and in the closing chapter of his second epistle to the Corinthians he said, "Finally, brothers, farewell . . ." (verse 11).

Can't we do something to restore the use of the word "brother" and "sister" as we refer to our fellow Christians? Is it not a beautiful way to address one another? Are the terms not endearing?

What if the words "brother" and "sister" are old-fashioned? So also are the words "love," "faith," and "hope."

If there is a lost chord in the symphony of present-ay Christianity that is more disturbing to perceptive elievers than perhaps any other aspect of the Christian ife-style, it is the apparent loss of a viable re-ationship with the Holy Spirit.

There is much confusion about the person of the oly Spirit and the relationship of the Spirit to elievers. Some equate the speaking of tongues with he baptism of the Spirit so necessary in every believ-r's life. But Jesus never indicated that; neither did is greatest follower, the apostle Paul. Moreover, peaking in tongues is placed at the foot of the ladder f spiritual gifts. And the apostle Paul, who acknow-edged the gift of tongues and who himself could speak n tongues, said, "I had rather speak five words with y understanding, that I might instruct others also, han ten thousand words in a tongue" (I Corinthians 4:19).

Jesus endeavored to make clear to His disciples the haracter and mission of the Holy Spirit. "If ye love e," He said, "ye will keep my commandments. And I ill pray the Father, and he shall give you another omforter, that he may be with you for ever, even the pirit of truth: whom the world cannot receive; for t beholdeth him not, neither knoweth him: ye know im; for he abideth with you, and shall be in you. I ill not leave you desolate: I come unto you" (John 4:15-18).

The Holy Spirit, said Jesus, "whom the Father will end in my name, he shall teach you all things, and ring to your remembrance all that I said unto you" John 14:26).

What is more, Jesus told His disciples that the oly Spirit would also convict the world of sin and of ighteousness and of the judgment.

The Holy Spirit is the source of the believer's ower in witnessing to others about Jesus. "But ye hall receive power," said Jesus, "when the Holy Spirit

is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses bot in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and unt the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

And Jesus promised to continue to bless His follow ers with the Spirit's presence saying, "If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto you children, how much more shall your heavenly Father giv the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" (Luke 11:13).

One of the most marvelous aspects of the human body s its capability to express itself by its voice so onderfully in conversation and so enchantingly in ong.

I have just listened, for instance, to a recording f Yma Sumac, the beautiful Peruvian maiden from her ative village of Ichocan, 16,000 feet high in the ndes of Peru.

I was not prepared for the musical experience that as mine as she, by her entrancing voice, transported y mind on "a voyage of discovery into a new land of ound" (from the record's covering).

By her voice I was ushered into a completely new orld of music. I heard her voice soar into the coustic stratosphere and later descend into the depth f pitch found in the sub-contralto. And yet as she oared, effortlessly, as with the wings of a nightin- ale over this vast range of vocal sound, her voice till contained its thrilling clarity and lost nothing f its moving timbre and richness. She sang her own hosen songs from her Inca background, supported by he music of Moises Vivanco.

As I sat in the afterglow of the enchanting sound f the awesome voice of this maiden of the Andes, I ad this thought:

Could we not in our churches make more of music? ould we not strive harder for the best in music. . . or the employment and cultivation of the best voices n our midst? Let us sing more often the songs that nspire and lift the human heart and mind reverently n the mysterious majesty of God's presence.

David must have felt this way too, for did he not peak to the chief of the Levites "to appoint their rethren the singers, with instruments of music, psal- eries and harps and cymbals, sounding aloud and lift- ng up the voice with joy" (I Chron. 15:16)? And "so he singers, Heman, Asaph, and Ethan, were appointed, . . And Chenaniah, chief of the Levites, was over

the song: he instructed about the song, because he w
skilful" (verses 19-22).

And in our singing, and in our instruction in son
let us strive for the best--for that which makes t
mind, and the heart, and the soul, wing upward
flight to God.

Family life in today's world is beseiged by many versaries. Some of the adversaries are secularism, terialism, the breakdown of authority, financial essures, absenteeism of parents, divorce--to mention ly a few of the aspects of the crisis.

All of this calls to mind an experience I had with couple where the crisis had reached its worst in a attering explosion of family ties and understanding.

The hubsand came to my office, late in the after-on, by appointment and almost before he was seated, urted out these words, "I want God's help!"

I sat and listened to the story that fell from his ps with broken sobs almost as the waters of a cata-ct tumbling on their way to the sea.

As I heard of the tragic consequences of the sepa-tion, God gave me a ray of hope, whereupon I called e wife by telephone.

Within thirty minutes the estranged wife was in my fice seated beside her husband.

"It's all my fault," she said as she wept audibly.

"No, it's not all your fault . . . it's not all s fault," I said.

After much counseling and prayer, we arose from ir knees, and I turned my face toward the window that ooked out upon the setting sun as they clasped each her in a warm embrace while vows of reconciliation re spoken.

Weeks later, the young husband, a government em-oyee, said to me with deep emotion, as we drove along uth on Airways Boulevard in Memphis (he had called id asked if he might chauffeur for me on that day), sn't it wonderful! God did it, didn't he?"

So it is when God is allowed to enter the scene of fragmented home and both parties have a burning desire pick up the fragments and put them back together ain. Unto the glory of God, no crisis is too great.

"What of the moon landing? What if other planet beckon us and we discover that some of them are inhabit ed with human beings, as is our own planet? What wil be the effect of it all on your role in the world as minister of the Gospel?"

"Lengthened cords and strengthened stakes," I re plied to the Commercial Appeal reporter just afte news came of the moon landing.

"If and when it is determined that there are othe human beings in the universe apart from us on plane Earth, I consider that our responsibility will be onl the greater to share our knowledge of God and the reve lation which is made available to us in the form of Hi Incarnate Son." This is the mission of the children God. We must remember that there are other sheep tha are "not of this fold."

It is at this point that we see the chief failur of the church in our day. Secure in our own hopes fo life eternal, we fail to remember uncounted hosts th world over who profess no hope in God.

Much is said today about "caring." The word "car ing" has come to be part of our favorite slogans whe we would compliment ourselves in relation to others But what is the length, and the breadth, and the height and the depth of our caring?

Are we concerned for the souls of men? Are w interested in helping them to get rid of their rest lessness and of their lack of peace?

The happiest people I have known over the year have been people with a deep and abiding faith in God- a faith that is established through personal encounte with His Spirit.

This thing which Jesus called "rest for your souls surpasses all other human values and the standards human reckoning.

And He seemed to make it so easy for all to achiev saying, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heav

den, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon
ı, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart:
d ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matthew 11:28+).

"What do you think is the most important step succeeding in life?"

This question was asked Mrs. Florence Humphreys a writer of "The Columns" of Memphis State Universit

Mrs. Humphreys' husband was the Chancellor of t University.

Her answer was, "Accepting Jesus Christ as Lo and Savior, and prayerfully living the plan He has f each of His own." And remember this was not the Mou tain Preacher speaking, or Billy Graham, but Floren Humphreys, the first lady of Memphis State Universit

Obviously she believed the words of Jesus found Matthew 6:33: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God a his righteousness; and all these things shall be add unto you."

The priority set forth in Jesus' words is clear crystal. But a better definition of the premise cou hardly be found than in the above words of the fir lady of Memphis State University.

Jesus' word "seek" means to continue to seek--th is, continue to strive after, to seek after, the kin dom of God and His righteousness.

But note the concluding words of Jesus in the pa sage, " . . . and all these things shall be added un you." That is, the necessaries of life such as fo and clothing will somehow be taken care of. Your bas needs will be supplied.

My church in Memphis was located at the crossroa of the city. Throughout the day there came to my stu fragments of the forgotten people. I never turned o away without giving him assistance. Sometimes a m who needed shoes would hold up for me to see the hol in the shoes that he wore. Sometimes it was a shi that he needed, a coat, an overcoat in winter, a always food. A question I asked to all who came wa "What is your relationship to God? Do you know Jesu Have you tried faithfully during the past 30 days carry out God's commands in every area of your life?

Not once did I receive an affirmative answer.

The top priority for every true believer is to ke Jesus at His command and to seek "first the king- m of God and his righteousness." This means putting ur trust completely in Him and in His way of life... aning upon Him not only for the saving of your soul t also for wisdom, and for guidance in your quest for e necessaries of life.

Mammon and Vain Glory

Gerhard Kittel, notable German theologian, said "Two forces particularly are mentioned by Jesus as forces which man must renounce and fight against if he is to love God, namely, mammon and vain glory."[6] The love of God leaves no place for love of prestige. Jesus said His followers are to seek first "the kingdom of God and his righteousness."

To seek first God's kingdom and His kind of righteousness makes it difficult for a person to abound, at the same time, in "the things of this world, its riches and fame."[7]

But God does promise to give the necessary things of life to His children if they genuinely seek first the progress of His kingdom.

This "righteousness" of God, of which Jesus spoke, is that principle of divine activity that "brings the disciple into harmony with the will of God."[8] And all of this is to be regarded as a gift from God. So is everything, for that matter, that relates man to God's kingdom.

When we seek first God's kingdom we find our security not in our own strength or in our own reckoning; on the other hand, we gain our rest from the Spirit on which we lean for guidance in all things.

Think what would happen to the material economy of our world, and to its moral and spiritual life-style, if only the confessed followers of Jesus Christ embraced this premise and seriously endeavored to put it into practice.

A Folly

Once as I was driving through the lovely countryide of England not far from London, my eyes fell upon he foundation ruins of an old abandoned structure.

Pointing out the mass of moss-covered crumbling tone, I said to my driver, "What's that?"

"That's a folly," he answered. "Someone started omething and then failed to go through with it. We all such a wasted effort a 'folly.'"

A "folly" is what Jesus had in mind when He spoke o His followers on the exacting character of discipleship, saying, "For which of you, desiring to build a ower, doth not first sit down and count the cost, hether he have wherewith to complete it? Lest haply, hen he hath laid a foundation, and is not able to inish, all that behold begin to mock him, saying, his man began to build, and was not able to finish" Luke 14:28-30).

This tragic picture of an unfinished building ffort may be likened unto many so-called followers of hrist whose names are found on church rolls. Joyously hey began to lay the foundation for a new life-style, ut for some reason they became weary of the effort and ecame drop-outs on their pilgrimage.

Actually the church would be far better off today f those who have "turned away" from the quest would ave their names removed from the church roll. The haracter of the church is judged by the life-styles nd commitment of the members.

It is an extremely costly experience to follow Jesus n spirit and in truth, for He said, "Whosoever doth not ear his own cross, and come after me, cannot be my isciple" (Luke 14:27).

Springtime

I wish that every person in the land could dwell in these Blue Ridge Mountains for a short season each year. To be here in the spring when, as James Whitcomb Riley said, "the green gets back on the trees," or when the brilliant colors of autumn adorn the forests is to see nature in all its glory.

Mrs. Caudill and I saw the foliage of springtime this year in its startling beauty. There were times when I felt that we could see many of the colors of the rainbow in the lush foliage of the trees.

The shades of the green itself ranged all the way from the darkest to the lightest of the oils on nature's palette.

The psalmist, as he contemplated man's insignificance in God's sight, said, "But as for me, I would seek unto God, And unto God would I commit my cause; Who doeth great things and unsearchable, Marvellous things without number; Who giveth rain upon the earth, And sendeth waters upon the fields; So that he setteth up on high those that are low, And those that mourn are exalted to safety " (Job 5:8-11).

To be here in the seasons and look up at the clear blue of the skies above and upon the clouds as they float lazily by overhead and observe the tiny wisps of vapor, too small really to be called a cloud but which, nevertheless, have their place in the broad expanse of the firmament--all of these, for pensive minds, tend to exalt the greatness and the goodness of God and to cause man to examine his own self in the light of that greatness and goodness.

As we contemplate these scenes and even briefly, we see the syndrome of life manifested so richly even in the leaves of the trees. To enjoy the colors of the much-varied petals of the tiny flowers that grow by the wayside and to listen to the gurgling, sparkling waters of the mountain springs as they begin their journey to the sea is to be lifted up, yes, to be caught up in the heavenlies!

Resurrection

The German philosopher, Arthur Schopenhauer, said, "Every parting gives a foretaste of death; every coming together again a foretaste of the resurrection."[9] If this be true, the apostle Paul had many reminders of death and many foretastes of the resurrection, for he was forever parting with friends on his missionary journeys and coming together again with friends over the brief span of his ministry which made him one of the most traveled men of his day.

From his words recorded in the New Testament, one thing is certain: he looked forward to, and longed for, the resurrection. This faith in, and longing for, the experience of the resurrection of the dead was, I believe, the keystone in the arch of his faith. It was almost as though he were on a marathon with but one major goal, namely "that I may come to know him personally and the power of his resurrection . . .if somehow I might attain unto the resurrection from the dead" (Philippians 3:10-11).

Many of Paul's fellow countrymen did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. The Sadducees believed neither in the resurrection nor in angels and spirits. But Paul's mind was satisfied once and for all concerning the reality of the resurrection of Jesus and of the resurrection of believers in general. Otherwise he could not have left the stirring testimony found in I Corinthians 15 and in I Thessalonians 4:13-18.

To him the resurrection of the dead demonstrated for all time the surpassing greatness of God's power. And this was one of the special objects of knowledge that he wanted his fellow believers to grasp, saying, "Having the eyes of your heart enlightened, so that you may know . . . what is the surpassing greatness of his power toward those of us who continually put our trust in him, according to the working of the gripping strength of his mighty power, which he put forth in Jesus Christ when he raised him from among the dead and seated him on his right hand in the heavens" (Ephesians 1:18-20).

Apart from the assurance that "we shall live again," there is no comfort in the hour of death, and all must cry out as the pagan mother weeps beside the grave of her little one and says, "Farewell, farewell, my littl one, farewell; eternally farewell, farewell."

The ultimate realization of this hope in Christ was the capstone of Paul's magnificent obsession. What did it matter--his suffering here on earth, his trials his stonings, his imprisonments, his hunger, his thirst--so long as in the end he would rise from the dead and be in the company of Jesus forever?

Would that we all might come to have the faith of the little grandchild in Memphis who, upon seeing tears in the eyes of her grandmother as the two of them stood alone by the grave of her only daughter only days after the funeral service, said,

"Don't cry, Me-Maw. Mommy's not down there in the grave. . . she's in heaven with Jesus and the angels!"

When the hundred-foot-long blades of the Howard's Knob windmill of Boone began to turn, the whole undertaking became a rousing venture for the entire community.

My brother Jake, who lived on Howard Street with a clear view of the windmill, took picture after picture of it and appeared to be as proud of the windmill as he would have been of the birth of a great-grandchild.

There, mounted on a little platform just west of the Northwestern Bank at 211 East King Street, was a telescope where anyone could take a special look for a quarter.

Pedestrians on Main Street would stop and stare at the blades as they slowly turned.

But the blades did not turn for long. The whole undertaking became a fiasco. An editorial in the Journal-Patriot labeled it "a monument to asininity." Certainly in the planning someone failed to consider all that was involved by the experiment, for the 21,500 pound blades are down now, and gone. And the windmill is no more!

What can be done to keep Christians faithful and productive in their commitment?

Jesus, coming to the heart of the problem, clearly spelled out the cost:

"If any man would come after me," He said, "Let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what shall a man be profited, if he shall gain the whole world and forfeit his life? or what shall a man give in exchange for his life?" (Matthew 16:24-26).

The date was July 26, 1971, when the 36-story Saturn rocket took off with Col. James B. Irwin, Maj. Al Worden, and Col. Dave Scott for rendezvous with the moon.

Irwin was not the first man to set his foot on the moon, for that honor went to Neil Armstrong, a member of the Apollo XI crew, two years earlier.

But something wonderful did happen to Col. Irwin when, as a crewman on Apollo XV, he became the eighth man to walk on the surface of the moon.

Irwin said, "As we flew into space we had a new sense of ourselves, of the earth and of the nearness of God. We were outside of ordinary reality. I sensed the beginning of some sort of deep change taking place inside of me."[10]

In discussing his "spiritual odyssey," Irwin told how he prayed to God for guidance concerning procedures in dealing with the "Central Station," which failed to erect itself on schedule. "It was almost like a revelation," he said. "God was telling me what to do. I never asked Houston (Mission Control) because I knew there would be a delay. I didn't have time for Houston to get an answer to me."

Actually, God is waiting all the time to intervene in a helpful way in behalf of His children.

Was this not what the psalmist had in mind when he said, "God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth do change, And though the mountains be shaken into the heart of the seas; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, Though the mountains tremble with the swelling thereof" (Psalm 46:1-3)?

"The hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that ıles the world." The author of those words (William ɔss Wallace) could hardly have paid a greater tribute ɔ motherhood. It is the mother, rather than the ıther, who lives most closely to the growing child ıring the early, formative years. It is into her eyes ıe infant looks most often. It is into the baby's ırs that the mother's voice is heard most frequently.

It is usually the mother that hears the baby's cry ıd runs to minister to its every need.

It is the mother who patiently waits, most expect-ıtly, the coming of the child. It is the mother who reams most often of the days that are yet to be in the ife of her child.

In the pliant years of childhood the mother gently ants the seeds of thought that, in years of maturity, ıape the concepts of truth and duty that govern the ıll-grown man.

By her example, and by her patient instruction, she ads her child by way of learned responses that will rve him well as he faces bewildering crises in his n life in years to come. The mother knows, as Alex-ıder Pope has said, "Just as the twig is bent the ree's inclined."

These are only a few of the much-varied impacts of ıe mother's life upon the growing child by virtue of r God-given role in motherhood.

This must have been why Hannah in her stirring out-ırst of joy incident to the birth of her own child ıid, "For this child I prayed; and Jehovah hath given my petition which I asked of him: therefore also I ve granted him to Jehovah; as long as he liveth he granted to Jehovah" (I Samuel 1:27-28).

Many a mother today can say, "For this child I ayed . . . ." But how many mothers can say, "There-re also I have granted him to Jehovah. . ."?

It may be at this point that mothers fail most t- day. Concerned they are for the secular education their child, and for their child's advancement in a the social ways of man. But how great is the co- cern of the average mother for the child's relationsh to the Lord?

The rash of crime so common in the streets tod is surely due to the fact that the youth involved ha not had mothers and fathers who began early in the lives to instill the concepts of truth and duty th spring from our Judeo-Christian heritage.

The ancient Jewish mother was told by the Lord instruct her children in the ways of the Lord and instill into their young hearts, as the first gre duty of man, the keeping of God's commands. In years of voluntary association with the juvenile cou of Memphis, Tennessee, I do not recall an instan where a Jewish or Chinese lad was caught up in t toils of the law and incarcerated there because delinquency.

Let the mothers of today, on this their annual d of recognition, pledge themselves afresh to instru their children, early in life, in the ways of God a in their duties to God and man in the light of God commands.

Ladder to the Sky

The setting of the story I now relate was the Cave ill cemetery of Louisville, Kentucky. I have seen he like of this only once. I hope I will never see t again.

A man had just lost his life in a railroad accident nd the little group of mourners was standing about the pen grave as the minister intoned the farewell words f the ritual of commitment.

The wife of the man who had lost his life was seated ear the grave, along with other members of the family, eeping.

Upon the last word of the benediction, the funeral irector began to lower the casket into the vault below.

Just as the casket was nearing the vault, the little ife jumped up, uttered a horrendous shriek with her iping voice, saying, "I'm going to get in there with im!"

With the help of others, I was able to restrain er and pull her back from the open grave after one oot had already left the earth for the tomb.

Why did such a scene as this take place? Obviously ecause of the overwhelming grief of the one who was eft behind. But back of this was a lack of under-tanding of death, and of the promises of God, and of ommitment to His Son who rose from the grave.

Did not Jesus say, "Let not your heart be troubled: elieve in God, believe also in me. In my Father's ouse are many mansions; if it were not so, I would ave told you; for I go to prepare a place for you... come again, and will receive you unto myself; that here I am, there ye may be also . . . I am the way, nd the truth, and the life . . ." (John 14:1ff.)?

Death ne'er can slay the faithful child of God,
In that he treads no more the paths of lowly sod;
Death's but a ladder reaching to the sky,
Where eyes from all of sorrow's tears are dry.

--R.P.C.

The Purposes of God

One of the most remarkable persons to invade th plane of human history was Helen Adams Keller (1880 1968). Born to what appeared to be a normal child hood, she succumbed to an illness that deprived her o both her sight and her hearing.

Unruly, in the loss of her sight and hearing, sh became a frustrated, vexed, and unhappy child, hard t live with and hard to deal with.

Fortunately there came into her life a gifte teacher, Anne Sullivan, who, with rare insight an unusual patience, led Helen Keller out of her night o total darkness into days brilliant with a light whic many seeing eyes never behold.

Helen Keller mastered the art of speaking so tha she could be heard distinctly, at close range, and th art of writing in which she was able to share wit others fruitful yieldings of her fertile mind.

Once I heard her speak in Augusta, Georgia. Th gathering was small, for we met in one of the conferenc rooms of the old Bon Air Resort Hotel. In the cours of her message, she allowed the audience to interrup her with questions. One question went like this "Helen, do you ever grow tired of not being able t see, or to hear? Do you ever grow weary with the con dition that has deprived you of so many of life' chiefest joys?"

"Oh, no!" she answered. "I always feel that Go is somehow working out His purpose through me."

As I listened to those pensive words falling fro the lips of Helen Keller, it seemed that for a while forgot that she was deaf and could not see. She brough me, for the moment, out of the shell of self as I con templated with new understanding the glory of God' purposes when let loose to work in the life of a person

It was in this context that the apostle Paul wrot these stirring words to his Christian brothers an sisters in Rome, "We know that in everything God work

or good with those who love him, who are called
ccording to his purpose" (Romans 8:28, R.S.V.).

And from this verse comes the eternal promise that
od works with us and for us and unto good when we love
im and are called according to His purpose.

How straight they stand--the stately pines alo this graceful Nashville-Memphis highway! How chang the scene!

Only a few winters ago these same pine trees wo heavy coats of ice that bent them low. At times t treetops touched the ground. The view was almost th of a frozen wilderness.

Days later when the icy fingers of the winter bla released their hold on the pines, the trees refused "straighten up" until months had passed. Some of th resembled old men with hunched backs that push the heads jerkily toward the ground as they walk.

Today those same pine trees stand straight and tal and the expressway is a thing of beauty as it flo effortlessly by the trees that stand as sentinels a nod to travelers as they come and go.

The experience of the pine trees may be likened un the experience of man caught up in the cheerless wint grip of circumstance. The icy blasts of life encount him and wrest from him, at least momentarily, both happ ness and hope.

Diverse in character are these chilling winds human circumstance that blow and lay us low: the dea of a loved one, disappointment and rejection in lovi relationships, financial disaster, crises in bodi health can literally fill a person's days with gloo sometimes drive away all cheer, and rid the soul, f the moment, of joy and peace.

But people, like trees, can overcome the chaot blasts of the winds of inevitable events, for God ever mindful of His own.

Jesus put it like this:

> Behold the birds of the heaven, that they s not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barn and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are n ye of much more value than they?

And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto the measure of his life? And why are ye anxious concerning raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?

Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Be not therefore anxious for the morrow: for the morrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. (Matthew 6:26-34).

Your Dwelling Place

Where do you dwell? I do not speak of the house in which you live, or of its location. I speak of what Jesus must have had in mind when He said, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7). Those are arresting words, words that too few have claimed in life.

Jesus was trying to make it clear that there is a God-man relationship that can be as real as a sunrise, and as glorious as a sunset.

But notice the condition: "If ye abide in me . . ." That is, "If I am your true dwelling place," you may ask what you will.

Here in one brief word, spoken by Jesus, lies the basis of answered prayer.

The follower of Christ is really not in position to receive divine guidance, or divine blessing, if he has not learned to abide in Christ. Paul uses the expression "in Christ" repeatedly, and in it he seems to reflect the ideal God-man relationship.

This relationship is characterized by a personal acquaintance with the Messiah, Jesus Christ the Lord. One may read all that is said about Jesus in the Bible and in diverse and voluminous words that have been written about Him, and yet not know Him personally.

Christ does not become for man a "dwelling place" until there has first been a personal encounter with Him as Savior and Lord. The stubborn will must give way to the will of God. The carnal impulses must be yielded to God for purification, for motivation to new and perfect ends.

Hate must give way to love ... doubt to faith . . . sorrow to rejoicing . . . despair to hope. In Christ all of these things and more can come to pass for a person, and do come to pass, when Christ becomes for the person the dwelling place.

Crime in our streets today, broken friendships, and the blasted hopes of erstwhile lovers take place on the part of individuals who have not found the divine abode, the dwelling place that God intended.

The pilgrimage is extremely demanding, and the road is often rough. At times there are painful experiences.

But in Christ, the true follower of Jesus is always victorious.

"Why did discoverers, like Columbus and others, pursue their challenging mission?" asked a news commentator who was recently interviewing the author of the new book, The Discoverers.

The author replied. "They love it. They can't be deflected."

World history is replete with the rousing stories of such men in both secular and religious undertakings.

There was Columbus, for instance, to whom the poet, Joaquin Miller, paid a stirring tribute when quoting Columbus' laconic reply to the messages brought to him by the ship's first mate concerning the mood of growing mutiny among the sailors who were homesick and heartsick and desirous to turn back. His words were, "Sail on, sail on. . . sail on and on!"

So it was with Caleb and Josnua who were sent by Moses with ten others to "spy out the land of Canaan."

Ten of the spies brought back frightening stories concerning the "strong" people that dwelt in the land, the fortified cities, and the hostile tribes, saying, "We are not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we . . . And there we saw . . . the sons of Anak, who come of the Nephilim: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight" (Numbers 13:31f.).

But Caleb "stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it."

And when the time came for the division of the trans-Jordanic inheritances, Caleb asked not for the lush valley of the Jordan where there was an abundance of grass and savory fruit on every hand; rather, he said, "Now therefore give me this hill-country, whereof Jehovah spake in that day; for thou heardest in that day how the Anakim were there, and cities great and fortified: it may be that Jehovah will be with me, and I shall drive them out, as Jehovah spake" (Joshua 14:12).

And Joshua blessed Caleb and gave unto him Hebron.

What greater need do we have on Father's Day than for fathers who, born of the Spirit through faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, share in the vision of God and in His effort to redeem the peoples of the world from the dominion of sin: men who endeavor to live faithfully by the commandments of our Lord; men who preside well over their homes, as the head of the family; men who lead in family devotions; men who teach their children how to pray, and who lead them in prayer; men who take sides on moral issues; men who read some portion of God's word daily; men who have their own private prayer life; men who lead their families in Bible study at the Sunday School hour and who, with the family, attend the worship service that follows; men who love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it; men who manifest gracious concern for all upright matters in community life; men who are good citizens and who put principle above party; men who vote and endeavor to help elect good men for public office; men who are charitable and kind in all their interpersonal relations with others; men who practice Biblical stewardship of both self and substance; men with an increasing resolve to set no value on anything they have or may come to possess except in its relationship to Jesus Christ and the realization of His redemptive mission for all the people of the world.

They do me wrong who say I come no more
When once I knock and fail to find you in;
For every day I stand outside your door,
And bid you wake, and rise to fight and win.[11]

These stirring words from the pen of Walter Malone are true, in a general way; for there are many kinds of opportunities that knock at our doors daily.

Nevertheless, there are types of opportunity that "come no more."

This truth came home to me, vividly, on Green Street Mountain Resorts, Inc., in Wilkes County, North Carolina, when I dropped in for a short visit with my friends, Mr. and Mrs. John Dale Wiles. I made my visit in the company of Mr. Harvey Holbrook of nearby Traphill, who lives on the farm once owned by my father, the place where I spent the early years of my life.

While I was visiting with Harvey and his wife Margaret who is the postmaster at Traphill, N. C., he had asked me if I would like to accompany him on a drive to see the marvelous transformation that is being brought about by Clyde A. Sidden and his brothers in the development on Green Street Mountain. A splendid roadway paved with asphalt leads to the top of the mountain where scores upon scores of families have purchased lots upon which to place their mobile homes or build cottages.

John Dale Wiles (son of the late John Granville and Stella Wiles) and his wife Doris chose lot No. 14 for their location and began to build their vacation home.

Aware of the considerable expense that might be involved in the drilling of a well, Dale invited some of his neighbors to cooperate with him in the drilling procedure so that they all might have a joint sharing in the undertaking. For some reasons, neither of the neighbors decided to join Dale in the venture.

This well-drilling is an uncertain thing anyway. One young couple to my knowledge, rather recently, had to drill the third well before they found water that was adequate.

Nevertheless, Dale and Doris decided to go ahead with their well, and on September 29 and 30, 1983, the well was drilled.

At 125 feet depth, the well driller struck water with a volume that is rare and enviable--75 gallons per minute!

Dale and Doris could hardly believe the report of the drillers until they saw it with their own eyes. There they were with a well that was capable of furnishing enough water for 75 homes, they were told.

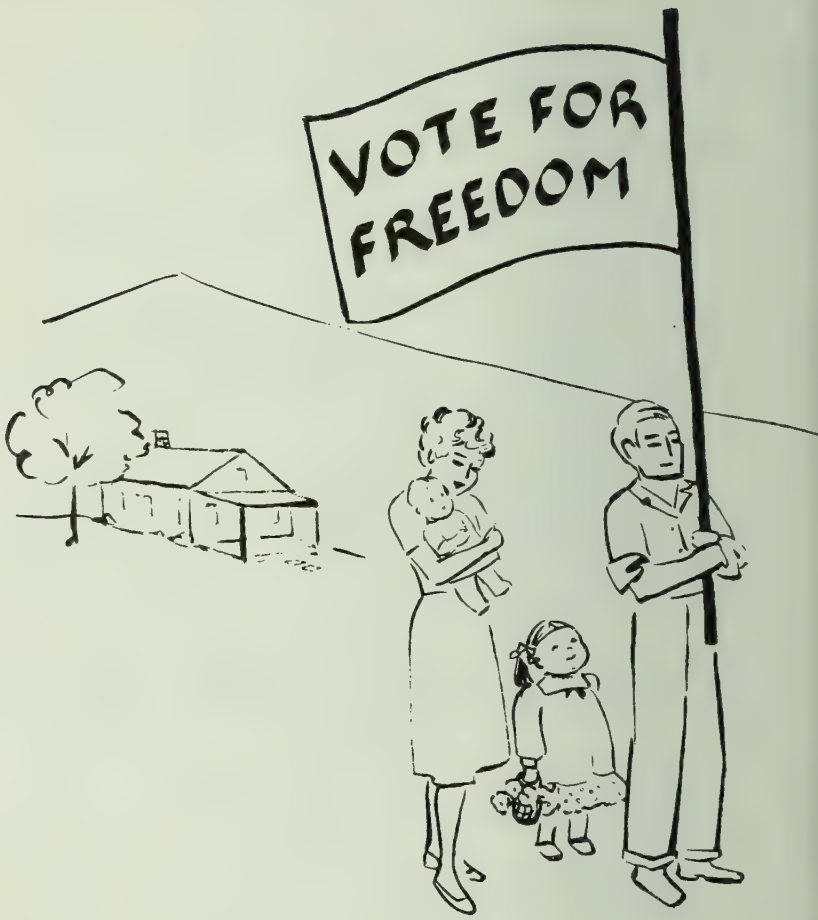
And the neighbors? You can imagine their feelings when they recalled the opportunity that had been theirs to share but that they had let pass by.

Somehow the above experience caused my mind to hark back to the words of the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews when he said, "Therefore we ought to pay far more attention to the things that were heard lest at any time we be swept away from them" (2:1, C.V.).

After all, the neighbors can drill their own well, for they still have the opportunity to do that. But the writer of the Hebrews speaks of a more serious matter. He has in mind the tragedy of neglect of one's personal salvation.

Hear the words of the gospel writer as he continues the theme: "For if the word spoken through the angels was valid, and every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how shall we escape, having neglected so great salvation; which, having first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also joining with them at the same time in giving additional testimony both by signs and wonders and by various kinds of powers and by distributions of the holy Spirit according to His own will" (Hebrews 2:2-4, C.V.).

This should give us all the more pause when we "know not," as James said, "what shall be on the morrow" (James 4:14). For, said James, "What is your life? For ye are a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away (4:14).


VOTE FOR
FREEDOM

Our Freedom

How long can the cherished freedoms we now exercise in our United States of America continue to be ours to enjoy?

This is a question that should give every serious-minded American pause. Already in many areas of public and private life there are aspects of our life-styles that are marked by decay and degenerate concepts of truth and duty.

One of these aspects is the exercise of our freedom to choose our elected representatives.

Armfield Coffey, Executive Editor of the Watauga Democrat, stated in an editorial on November 3, 1982, that "only 57 percent of the voters bothered to exercise their freedom to choose their elected representatives."

Mr. Coffey went on to emphasize the importance of one vote and to show how only one vote has made great changes in the course of history: by a single vote in 1645 Oliver Cromwell gained control of England, and by a single vote Adolph Hitler gained the leadership of the Nazi party in 1923.

If America loses her political freedom, it will likely be on account of the default of her citizens at the ballot box.

A nation is no stronger than the men, women, and youth who comprise the citizenship of the nation. Back of the President, back of the Congress, back of the armed forces stands the bastion that is composed of the citizens. As the citizens go, so will the nation go!

Man's real freedom, however, lies not in his national citizenship, or in the elected representatives of the nation. It lies not in the power of the nation as a whole, nor in the hands of those who govern the nation, to give or to take away man's essential freedom.

The basic freedom, the essential freedom, lies in the God-man relationship, a relationship whose roots lie in creation and in re-creation.

Jesus came to the heart of the matter when He sa
"If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my discipl
and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall m
you free....If therefore the Son shall make you fr
ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:32,36).

This is the freedom that the poorest of the p
may enjoy . . . and the richest of the rich . . .
the most enslaved of the enslaved--by faith. "For
grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not
yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, t
no man should glory" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Addendum:

I would entreat the Watauga Democrat to run
Coffey's editorial entitled "One Vote Can Mean a Chan
each year prior to election time. Such an editor
deserves to be read every year by our citizens.

Ceasing to Care

It is hard to believe, in fact I refuse to believe, that six out of ten Americans are not interested in religion today.

It is obvious that there are inundating waves of materialism and secularism on every side today and that there continue to be men without religion who, as Augustus William Hare said, are "the creature of circumstances."[12]

But these waves of unconcern for religion are not yet overwhelming, nor will they ever be while time stands and man is man.

In creating man, God created him in His own image thereby bringing into being a relationship that belongs to no other created thing. He created man with the ability to have fellowship with things divine and to worship the Creator. He gave man the ability to divert the expression of his instinctual desires or impulses from the natural to that which is refined in purity and excellence and exalted in dignity and cultural acceptance.

Man can never, by and large, remove himself from all interest in the Creator and in the life-styles designed by the Creator for him and for all his kind.

The fact that there are many who reflect no concern in religion is in no wise an indication that the religious cause is lost. It has never been lost, completely, since the dawn of history, nor will it ever be. On the other hand, there is room for great pause when a newscaster says six out of ten Americans are no longer interested in religion.

This, I think, is the kind of thing that the apostle Paul had in mind when he made his stirring plea for the abandonment of the old life-style (Ephesians 4:17-24).

Hear his words: "This I therefore say and solemnly charge you in the Lord, to walk no longer as also the Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind, being darkened in the understanding, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance among them,

because of the hardening of their heart, who, havin ceased to care, gave themselves over to shocking con duct, in the practice of every uncleanness with greedi ness."

Paul paints a shocking picture of what happens i the life of man when he ceases to have an interest i matters that relate to religion, to the things of th Spirit.

"Having ceased to care," said Paul, such individua eventually give themselves over "to shocking conduct in the practice of every uncleanness with greediness" (v. 19).

A sadder day could hardly be born for man, and fo his life-style, than for him to come to the point i life that he walks in vanity, ceasing to care.

Then it is that the forces of hell leap up th escarpment and over the parapet of the bastion of hi mind and soul and, descending through the frail roo of faith, wreak havoc with his being.

Those Who Care

August 23, 1983, will always remain as a red-letter day in my life, for on that day I was the recipient of a beautiful expression of solicitude, of attentive and protective care that came from strangers in a needed hour.

On that particular morning, I was en route in my car to a gathering of the Stone Mountain Baptist Association leaders at the Fairplains Baptist Church. A few days before, I had installed a new set of tires on my '82 Oldsmobile, and when I left Traphill every tire seemed to be in perfect order.

As I neared the Maple Grove Baptist Church (Rev. Bill Nicholson, Pastor), going west on county road 1002, I realized that something was wrong with my right rear tire. Almost in an instant, it went flat with a bang.

I pulled out as far as I could get on the right shoulder of the road, and there stopped right behind me a lovely young lady driving a red Mazda pickup en route from Laurel Springs to North Wilkesboro for her daily work.

Quickly she got out of her vehicle and said, "I see you have tire trouble. Can I help you?"

"If you have a jack," I said, "I would like very much to borrow it, for I do not have one."

Being in a rather hazardous place for changing a tire, I pulled diagonally across the road and stopped directly in front of the Maple Grove Church. I had no sooner done this than the young lady crossed over behind my car, stopped her vehicle, and got out again as if to offer to help.

By this time, another pickup truck, driven by a young man en route home from his night of work, and in the company of his fellow workmen (I suppose), likewise stopped, and the man got out and said, "Can I help you?"

What followed is a picture that I will hardly forget.

These fine young men, using their own tools, changed my tire in a matter of minutes. When they had done so, I gratefully offered to pay them for their trouble, but quickly they assured me they would not receive any money for what they had done. "We are just glad that we could help you," they said.

I was deeply touched by the gracious concern of the young men (five of them in all) and the lovely young lady, a bride of some three months.

As we parted, and I drove away from the scene, I thought how wonderful it is to live in a county like Wilkes, where there are still people who care, people who manifest their solicitous concern in deed as well as in words.

Actually, the manner in which these young people responded to my needs was inspiring and gave me a desire to be more helpful to others at every opportunity and to share with others in times of need.

"So then," said the apostle Paul, "as we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith" (Galatians 6:10).

The names of the above young people are as follows: Mrs. Dennis (Cheryl) Shaw, Route 1, Glade Valley, NC; Tony Shumate, P. O. Box 167, Hays, NC; John Whitney, P. O. Box 147, Hays, NC; Michael Haynes, Route 1, Box 72, Hays, NC; and one other young man whose address I failed to obtain.

The Great Destroyer

For years untold, beverage alcohol has been called he great destroyer. Now there is additional evidence o corroborate that premise.

Alcohol is the one drug problem which affects, in related sense, one out of every five families in our and. Twenty-five thousand persons are killed annually nd 750,000 injured in alcohol-related traffic acci-ents.

Now the problem of beverage alcohol grows among eenagers. Of the teenagers that drink, we are told hat 70 percent take their first drink by age 12. By he time these young people have finished high school, 7 percent of them, according to the best polls, have iven alcohol a try.

Over 3.3 million teenagers between 13 and 17 years f age wrestle with some phase of a drinking problem. Many of the teenagers report that "all or most of their riends get drunk every weekend."[13]

I made my decision about strong drink when I was n the fifth grade. I saw one of my best friends, a classmate, come staggering into the post office at raphill, hardly able to stand. When I looked at him, said, "If beverage alcohol will do that to a person, will never give it a chance at me."

I have kept faith with that resolve.

But far more important than my words on the subject are the words of God. Here is what He says: "Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler; And whosoever erreth thereby is not wise" (Proverbs 20:1).

And again He says in His word: "Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with men, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God" (I Corinthians 6:9-10).

Doors to Disaster

Drug abuse has been a global affliction.

Contemporary drug use, on the rise throughout the world, poses a danger signal that all should heed. Unless society as a whole gives heed to this signal, we may soon find ourselves on the road to disaster.

The misuse of drugs is confined to no single country or to any one segment of the population. The poor, the rich, the old, the young, women, men, according to Bror A. Rexed in The Rotarian (October, 1978), "Smoke marijuana, drink alcohol, ingest cocaine, take various pills to calm down, pop up, lose weight, stay awake. Between May, 1976, and April, 1977, more than 57 million prescriptions for the tranquilizer Valium were written in the U.S.A. alone. Take a look in your own medicine cabinet and you will see them, some of the more than 26,000 licit drugs on the market. And new ones are being manufactured each year."

Back of the whole drug problem is a failure to understand that the human body is the temple of God's Spirit, that man essentially is not his own.

"Know ye not that ye are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man destroyeth the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, and such are ye" (I Corinthians 3:16).

And again the apostle Paul said, "Or know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have from God? and ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body" (I Corinthians 6:19-20).

When a person wakes up to this grand truth and permits the Spirit of God to become the ruler of his mind and heart and soul, he immediately becomes a new kind of creature: "The old things are passed away; behold, they are become new" (II Corinthians 5:17).

Herein lies the only lasting remedy for drug abuse.

Truth forever on the scaffold
Wrong forever on the throne.[14]

Truth may be forever on the scaffold, but "wrong" is not "forever on the throne"--not in the lives of those who come to know Jesus Christ.

This is the testimony of Kit Haskett, circus ringmaster for Barnum and Bailey who decided not to renew his contract with the circus in the fall of 1982.

Briefly, here is his story, as recorded in DECISION of March, 1983.

The great-grandson of a minister, Kit Haskett grew up without any viable relationship to Christ. At age 16, when his father and mother were separated by divorce, Kit turned his back upon Christianity.

For a while he tried Buddhism and philosophy. Now and then he read the Bible.

One day at Foothill College, after he had started on drugs, and was living with a friend who was deep in drugs, he came to himself and resolved to break the habit.

Three years passed before Kit could work his way out of his problem. He told how his pulse would jump up to 180 and hives would break out on his chest and forehead and how he would see "creatures" crawling on the walls.

Once he thought he was dying.

At college Kit threw his books in the trash can, but later enrolled in Chapman College, where he met "Stewy," whom he later married and with whom he finally settled down in circus life.

In the meantime, Kit heard a woman tell about Jesus Christ, and the quest began in earnest for the truth.

Kit made his decision one night as he drove home from a bridge game. Then it was that he began to yearn for a personal relationship with Christ. Then it was that he received Christ as Savior and Lord.

"I came to realize that I was humanly incapable of forgiveness or love or anything else. God took away the pain that had been building up, and He gave me peace and confidence and made His forgiveness a reality in my life. The unforgiving heart had been like a wall that God had to break down. Once He broke down that wall, things really began to happen."

After the great change came in his life, Kit started a small prayer group in the circus with six to twelve people, beginning with a circus dwarf named George Raleigh.

People laughed at Kit for what he was doing, but he went on, being joined in the group by workers and clowns.

"My heart is really in ministering to people with the gospel of Jesus Christ," said Kit. "My job could change, but my devotion to Christ will never change."

And this is what Jesus seeks on the part of us who profess to be His disciples. He wants us, even as He, to be the same "yesterday, today, and forever."

And this is the way it has to be with those of us who comprise the church. If our witness is to be effective, we must become "changeless" in our devotion to Christ and in our service in His name. This "off-again/on-again" type of Christianity has no meaning for a lost world. It never has had, and it never will have, meaning for those who, in the depths of despair, are seeking the truth about God and His Son.

Worry Warts

The word "worry" has an interesting origin. It is akin to an old High German word wurgen meaning "to strangle."

The word as we use it more often relates to persistent or nagging attention to a given matter or thing. The idea implies a measure of mental distress or agitation that results in anxiety.

Now a worry wart is one who is inclined "to worry unduly."

Worry, on the part of Christians, indicates a lack of faith . . . a lack of trust in the loving care of the heavenly Father.

Jesus was aware of the problem of worry as it related to His followers who were forever in the clutches of trials, hardship, and sufferings. This is why He said, "Therefore I say unto you, Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than the food, and the body than the raiment? Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto the measure of his life? And why are ye anxious concerning raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" (Matthew 6:25-30).

It is not that one is to be rid of every measure of anxiety in every human situation--that is not the point. If a mother should see her little child at the point of racing into the path of oncoming cars, would she not have a measure of concern?

What Jesus is talking about is over-anxiety, the kind of concern that tends to produce, at least for the time being, a split personality.

God in His holy word has enjoined us to cast our cares upon Him, knowing that "He careth for you."

"Their Side . . . Our Side"

Is this the best way to speak of U.S.-Soviet relations? "Their side . . . our side" suggests that we have already drawn a line for confrontation and that it is fierce and strong.

Of course the line of demarcation between communism and democracy must always remain drawn "strong and firm," for the difference is great.

In a democracy like ours, there is a deep, unyielding, professed belief in God, in the dignity of the individual, and in the respect for freedom. In the concepts of communism, there is almost a total negation of these concepts of democracy.

The contrast must ever be recognized and kept vividly in the minds of all who love freedom and maintain a reverence for things divine.

But is it to the advantage of peace and good will to continue to draw battle lines in conversation, whether civil or political?

I know something of the horrors of communism, for I have traveled widely through the lands of the hammer and sickle. I have shared the confidence of those who told me "how bad it is" at times.

But would it not be better for us of the U.S.A. to continue to do "our thing" in the strengthening of our defenses and, taking all necessary steps to deter any aspects of aggression by hostile powers, to do so without constantly addressing the semblance of battle lines?

Statements such as "our side . . . their side," as made by General Daugherty, former Commander S.A.C., might well be deleted from our dialogue.

In the nuclear age, there is only one side of hope of freedom from total destruction in nuclear war; that side is "everybody's business," a term the general used in the same interview (CBS News, Thursday, October 20, 1983).

After all, are there not deeply rooted spiritual ties between those of the U.S. and those of all other nations? For in the various nations there are both Jews and Christians, as well as others of diverse religious beliefs. Are these ties of common moral and spiritual concern to be disregarded because we live on different areas of the globe?

Not all Russians are communists. I happen to know that there are hundreds of thousands of believers within the satellite countries that long for peace--peace that is based on the righteousness of God.

Does this not mean then that all who are committed to the Judeo-Christian concepts of truth and duty have bonds of friendship and love that must ever be respected in dialogue? After all, in speaking for Christians, said the apostle Paul, "We are members of his body" (Ephesians 5:30); and again, "Wherefore, putting away falsehood, speak ye truth each one with his neighbor: for we are members one of another" (Ephesians 4:25).

Let us be strong in our defense of right, first for ourselves, then for all the peoples of the world; but let us do so without threatenings and careless aphorisms which may only serve to plant more deeply into the minds of people the persuasive possibilities of ultimate conflict.

Footnotes

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